

## The Third Mask

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Summary: Annabeth Chase's life wasn't the best, perhaps, but at least she had her friend, Thalia and boyfriend, Luke. At least, she thought she did. Follow Annabeth as she struggles with what to make of herself after her friends' betrayal. All-human AU. First story, originally written for a class project. Rated T for mental health issues and possible language.

## The Third Mask

\*\*AN: This is my first story, so reviews are welcome! Also, I own nothing but the plot line. The great Rick Riordan owns the characters.\*\*

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Some cultures believe that people wear three masks. The first mask is the face you show to the public, such as teachers and peers. The second is shown to your family and close friends. The third, however, is the truest representation of you, because it's the one you show to no one but yourself. How well can you really know a person, if they don't show you who they really are?

Have you ever heard that quote about not really knowing someone until you've walked a mile in their shoes? Think about the people around you. Imagine a bubbly girl whose smile never leaves her face. She always is the first to volunteer, and relishes in being involved. At home though, she's soft spoken and spends her time reading in her bedroom. And yet, you have no clue who she is when she's completely alone. You cannot fathom the thoughts and emotions running through her mind. It could be your best friend, who you know everything about, and have no idea \_who \_they are. Scary, isn't it?

I woke to the sound of "Welcome to My Life," by Simple Plan. Groaning, I reached over to my phone and switched off the alarm. Oh, how I despise mornings. It should be illegal to be up before the sun

is. Especially if you don't fall asleep until 3 AM. I wanted nothing more than to just burrow into the cocoon of blankets and sleep for another hour or three.

Life, however, doesn't allow such luxuries. Eventually I would have to get up and ready myself for The Nightmare, which is more commonly known as high school. Thank goodness for the two bright spots in my life: my best friend Thalia (more like my sister), and my wonderful boyfriend Luke. My dad never really paid much attention to me (except to annoy me about grades and applications). Luke and Thalia, however, have been there for me more times than there are stars in the heavens, which I am eternally grateful for. I couldn't have ever asked for better people in my life.

Sighing to myself, I left the warm embrace of my bed. I staggered toward the bathroom to get ready for the day that faced me, and tried to shake off the emotional numbness that surrounded me. A quick shower, a change of clothes, and a piece of toast later, I stared into my mirror as I tried to cover up the dark shadows clinging under my eyes. Exhaustion was a constant presence in my life, even before senior year. Even if I wasn't up late every night trudging through a pile of homework, sleep still eluded me. The stress of school and college applications certainly didn't make sleep any easier. I just hoped I could make it through the day. Luckily, Luke was driving me today, due to the fact my car was in the shop. I don't think I could stay awake for the drive otherwise.

Twenty minutes later, Luke picked me up in his second-hand, rusty old pickup truck. 'Typical country boy,' I thought to myself. Luke saw me, and opened the door for me. Once I was inside, he handed me a cup of coffee. He knew me so well. I wearily smiled my thanks, and he didn't attempt to start a conversation, because he knew I was still basically dead to the world.

Not much later, we pulled into the school parking lot. In an instant, I switched into what I refer to as 'bubbly-mode.' The quiet, tired teen transformed into my outgoing and vivacious counterpart. Luke and I strode into the small building hand in hand, with wide smiles plastered on our faces. This is why I loved Luke; he didn't judge me for being different people.

"You're coming to the party tonight, right?" Luke suddenly asked as we walked down the hall.

"Of course, babe," I replied, "I wouldn't miss it for the world." Luke was the captain of the basketball team, and they had won their home opener last night. "And," I continued, "Because I'm so great, I'll bring your favorite mint brownies," I said with a sly smirk. Luke's face lit up like the small child he was at heart at Christmas.

"You are the best!" he cried. His blue eyes sparkled, and picked me up with ease and spun me around before pulling me into a bear hug. I chuckled lightly. Luke was a little, shall I say, enthusiastic, about desserts.

"I know, babe," I replied with a wink. "I'll see you at the party tonight." At that point, Thalia showed up, and we strolled off to class.

After school that day, Thalia dropped me off at the auto shop so I could pick up my Malibu. Once I was home, I let the cheerful facade fall off. It was so much work just to act happy around others. It was much easier to be numb. Sighing quietly, I put on my 'Life Sucks' playlist on Spotify, poured myself another coffee, and made the promised brownies. At least I could brighten someone else's day, even if I couldn't do the same for myself. I shook myself out of that train of thought and headed off to the party.

I arrived at Luke's house, and discovered the party was already in full swing. A chorus of hellos welcomed me as I walked through the door. I put the brownies down in the kitchen and set off in search of my boyfriend. After asking around, one of Luke's teammates, Ernest, pointed me in the direction of Luke's room. Puzzled by the fact that he wasn't out with friends at his own party, I headed in that direction. As I approached his room, I could hear country music (Luke's favorite) softly playing. I noticed his door was open a crack, and peered in.

Luke was inside all right, but not alone. He had his arms around a girl with spiky black hair, and she had her fingers tangled in his blond hair. They were kissing, and at a party he knew I'd be at. It felt like a sledgehammer hit me in the chest, and I couldn't breathe. I staggered back as they broke apart and I realized that the other girl was Thalia, my supposed best friend. I ran away from the room and hid in the kitchen. I tried to compose myself, but the feelings running through my head were too much to handle. So, I escaped the way I usually did: I let the numbness overtake me.

Not long after that, Thalia came and found me. She walked up smiling brightly and tried to hug me, but I pushed her away. She had known me long enough to know that I only did that when something was wrong. A confused look came across her face.

"What's wrong?"

"Nothing you can help with."

"Oh, come on, just tell me. I know what you're going through, I've had phases too. Let me help you." When she said that she knew what was running through my head, the shell of numbness cracked, and I lost it. All I felt was the rage that poured through my veins.

"You \*\*don't\*\* know what it's like. You don't sit in your room, worried about whether your dad can hear you sobbing into a pillow. You don't feel like you're about to break down at any moment. You don't stare into the mirror and try to clear up the tracks that your tears made in your makeup, or hide the shadows under your eyes. You don't struggle to stay awake in school because you can't sleep. Don't tell me for a second that you know what I'm going through, because I'm sick of your lies. Is that all you can do? Lie? Because anything you tell me anymore turns out to be just that: a lie!"

"I just thought I could helpâ€¦," Thalia murmured, too ashamed to look into my hurt, rage-filled eyes.

"LIES!" I screamed. Our exchange was starting to get attention from others at the party. "You never think of anyone but yourself! And even if you did, I'd be the last person you cared about. So much for these last six years. How could I have ever thought you were my

friend? Did you think I wouldn't find out that you kissed Luke? Some 'sister' you turned out to be!" I spit venomously. She flinched as if I had slapped her. Feeling the tears forming in my eyes, I turned away and ran outside. Thalia could've easily caught me if she wanted, but I knew she wouldn't follow me. She didn't understand. No one did.

I ran out to my car, jumped in, and pulled away before my stereo even came on. As I sped down the lane, the tears spilled out and I began to sob. The road blurred in front of me as the tears clung to my lashes. Feelings hurt so much more than the numbness I had come to know. I had to control myself. My breaths started to even out and I wiped the tears away. The numb crept outward from my heart once more. The exhaustion that I had staved off with a ton of caffeine resurfaced. I continued speeding down the lonely dirt road, and let my focus wander to where I could go.

There was nowhere I could go now that someone wouldn't find me. By now, Thalia had certainly spread the word to Luke, and probably my dad, that I had run off. They all knew me so well. At least, they thought they did. Unfortunately, they did know my usual hiding spots, like the grove of willow trees on the edge of Benedict Creek, or the hunting cabin my neighbor owned. There was nowhere that I could go where no one would find me. I didn't want to be found. I just kept driving. I didn't know where I was going. I didn't care if I made it there. I just wanted to sleep.

End  
file.